

SENATOR MARK KIRK'S LAKE MICHIGAN REPORT CARD Summer 2011

GOALS: 1) Assess the health and status of Lake Michigan within the following categories: beach closures, sewage pollution, water levels, invasive species, and contamination remediation around the lakeshore. 2) Identify how local, state and federal leaders can restore and preserve Lake Michigan.

BEACH WATER QUALITY

➤ **Grade: D**

Explanation: The grade is based on number of beach closings; A = 0-100, B= 100-300, C= 300-500, D=500-700, F= 700+

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Beach Closures/ Contamination Advisories for Lake Michigan Beaches in Lake and Cook Counties	577	807	537	628	579

Every year, thousands of beach closings are issued along the 815 freshwater beaches in the Great Lakes region. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), *Testing the Water 2011*, Illinois ranked 26th of 30 in state beach water quality based on percentages of samples exceeding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) single-sample maximum. The single-sample standard for beach closures and advisory decisions in Illinois is 235 cfu/100 ml of *E. coli*. The NRDC report noted that 14 percent of the samples taken exceeded national water standards in 2010. In the report, the NRDC noted that Great Lakes beaches experienced 3,766 days of closings and advisories region-wide, a 14-percent increase from the 3,300 in 2009. This is a clear indicator that water pollution is on the rise.

There are 52 public beaches along Lake Michigan in Illinois. Over the last five years, annual totals for beach closings in Illinois continue above 500. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois faced 628 beach closures or contamination advisories in 2009, up 17 percent from 2008. In 2010, 579 beach closures and advisories for beaches along Lake Michigan continue to be a health concern and impact cash-strapped budgets. A University of Chicago study showed swim bans at Chicago's beaches due to *E. coli* levels cost the local economy \$2.4 million in lost revenue every year. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, the number of beach advisories and closings on the Lake Michigan shoreline in Illinois has remained above 500 a year over the last five years.

➤ **Action Item: Enact Beach Act**

This legislation would reauthorize the *Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health* ("BEACH") Act. The bill requires rapid testing methods to detect water contamination in four hours or less, faster notification and decision about closures and advisories within two hours and requires the EPA administrator to review grantees compliance with the BEACH act requirements.